

VZCZCXRO7267
PP RUEHRN
DE RUEHRN #0003/01 0131935
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 131935Z JAN 10
FM USMISSION UN ROME
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1247
INFO RUEHC/USAID WASHDC
RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY 0031
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0286
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0345
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0446
RHMFIUU/CJTF HOA
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHINGTON DC
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME 1324

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 04 UN ROME 000003

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR IO/HS, PRM/MCE AND EEB/IFD/ODA
USAID FOR DCHA, FFP, OFDA, AND AFRICA BUREAU
NAIROBI FOR GEORGIANNA PLATT, SUREKA KHANDAGLE AND NICK COX
TREASURY FOR DAN PETERSON, LIZA MORRIS AND PRIYA GANDHI

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [WFP](#) [SO](#) [AORC](#) [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [EFIN](#) [UNHCR](#)

SUBJECT: WORLD FOOD PROGRAM SOUTHERN SOMLIA OPERATIONS UPDATE

REF: A. (A) STATE 132604
 B. (B) UN ROME 01
 C. (C) UN ROME 77

1. (U) This message is sensitive but unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

Summary

2. (SBU) On January 12 the UN World Food Program presented an update on the current situation in southern Somalia to the Executive Board following WFP's partial suspension of operations announced on January 5 resulting from escalation of attacks and threats on WFP staff. WFP is still able to provide assistance to one half million IDPs in the Afgoye region and Mogadishu, but expressed uncertainty as to how much longer they would have access to Afgoye. The program will do all possible to continue operations. WFP's latest concerns are the recent skirmishes in Dhuusamarreeb, Galgaduud which have forced WFP to redeploy staff to the north in Adado and a new foreign element within Al-Shabaab with ties to Al Qaeda. WFP leadership, based on recent observations in southern Somalia, believes that with encouragement from community elders there is hope for a turnaround in the stance of militants who forced WFP to suspend operations. WFP will provide a weekly situation report (sitrep) in response to Board member requests for updates during the consultation. The first sitrep is attached at paragraph 11 of this cable.

Somalia Update with New Concerns and A Glimmer of Hope

3. (SBU) At a WFP informal consultation on January 12 attended by the UN Rome Ambassador, Deputy Executive Director (DED) Amir Abdulla and Chief Operating Officer and Director of Emergencies Ramiro Lopes da Silva updated the Executive Board on the current situation in southern Somalia. Donors had requested a consultation following escalation of threats and attacks on WFP

staff and unacceptable demands placed on the organization by armed groups leading up to WFP'S announcement of partial suspension of operations on January 5.

14. (SBU) In southern Somalia, WFP continues its work servicing approximately one million beneficiaries in Mogadishu, where relative calm exists, and Afgoye. Afgoye remains a humanitarian imperative as approximately 500,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) have access neither to food nor alternative livelihoods. WFP is not sure of how much longer they will be able to access Afgoye, where transport routes require that WFP cross Al-Shabaab militant lines, but reassured that they will do all possible to continue to assist beneficiaries.

15. (SBU) Alternative transport routes for humanitarian aid to reach Mogadishu and Afgoye are being explored. Airdrop of food has not yet been deemed necessary. Depending on access to Afgoye and movement of IDPs, airdrops could be necessary in as early as three weeks time. However, WFP predicts that should they be required to suspend distribution in Afgoye, IDPs would most likely move to Mogadishu.

16. (SBU) Prior to suspension of operations, WFP completed as much advance distribution of food stocks as possible, although some was seized by Al-Shabaab, with the remainder of food stocks and equipment repositioned to other WFP locations in the north of Somalia where storage capacity at WFP warehouses has been increased. No food stocks were left behind.

UN ROME 00000003 002 OF 004

17. (SBU) New concerns were communicated over recent skirmishes in Dhuusamarreeb, Galgaduud, which has forced WFP to redeploy staff to the north in Adado. WFP also noted their concern on a growing foreign element in Al-Shabaab, formerly local and clan-based; the Shura or command center of the organization is now headed by a Comorian national named Abdul Fazul, believed to be an Al Qaeda operative with links to the 1998 U.S. Embassy bombings in Kenya. WFP further stated that the situation has been made more complex by the fact they are no longer dealing with a decentralized group, but one that is more tightly controlled under central command and thus cannot be dealt with locally. With cautious optimism, the WFP COO observed that since WFP's departure after suspension of operations in the south, their absence is being noticed and with encouragement from community elders and/or clan pressure, there remains hope that hardliners will reverse their stance against WFP and allow them to resume operations.

WFP Current Strategy

18. (SBU) Several Executive Board members wondered whether other actors on the ground in Somalia could step in where WFP has suspended operations. In reviewing their current strategy/actions, WFP indicated that they have alerted other organizations with programs in Somalia such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) which has a limited presence mainly in the north. NGO operators in central and southern Somalia, however, have small capacities and would be unable to assume a large-scale operation. Furthermore, the current ban on

foreign food means all imports through any organization would be prohibited. Notwithstanding predictions of a good harvest, Somalia remains a food deficit country (local production has averaged 30 percent of food needs in the last five years) and local purchase would have debilitating effects on markets.

¶9. (SBU) With the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), WFP is assessing the potential movement in a worst-case scenario of one half million refugees out of central and southern Somalia: 200,000 would become internally displaced; 150,000 would displace to Kenya; 50,000 to Ethiopia; 30,000 to Djibouti; and 75,000 to Yemen. All refugee movement will depend on the length of WFP's suspension. WFP has a large presence in each of these possible IDP destination countries. If IDP movement occurs the resources programmed for Somalia would be switched to the appropriate country. WFP and UNHCR will jointly lead a regional contingency planning exercise before the end of January.

¶10. (SBU) A further strategy involves continuing to improve the logistics chain from north to central Somalia. In addition to moving product from Mombasa to Bossasso, WFP has opened a new distribution channel from Salalah, Oman to Bossasso. WFP communicated some of the challenges this northern route creates including the need to improve port capacity at Bossasso. The northern route also presents security concerns because of the Somaliland areas controlled by pirates as well as the issues of transport through the Red Sea.

Conditions for Normal Operations

UN ROME 00000003 003 OF 004

¶11. (SBU) WFP concluded that in order to return to normal operations, three conditions would be necessary: 1) previous conditions set out by controlling authorities for humanitarian agencies to operate must be rescinded (dismissal of all female staff, no identification of WFP in any way, required payments of \$30,000 every six months for 'operating license'); 2) the ban on imported food must be lifted; and 3) guarantees must be put in place for the safety of WFP staff.

Situation Report

¶12. (SBU) In response to Board member requests to be updated weekly, the following sitrep was disseminated to the Executive Board on January 13.

"WFP Somalia Operations Situation
As of January 11, 2010

Summary Update

-WFP has suspended its work in much of Southern Somalia due to escalating threats against WFP staff, and unacceptable demands by the armed groups controlling the area. WFP issued a statement on the 5 January which stated that it 'is deeply concerned about rising hunger and suffering among the most vulnerable due to these unprecedented and inhumane attacks on purely humanitarian operations.' WFP is repositioning stocks in case people begin to move in search of food. WFP offices in Waajid, Buaale, Garbahaarey, Jilib, and Beletwein in the south are temporarily closed, and staff has been moved to safer locations in central Somalia and Kenya.

- Despite the temporary suspension of its operations in parts of the south, WFP continues to provide life-saving food distributions to the rest of the country or to over two-thirds of the people in need, including 1.8 million people in Mogadishu. NOTE: 1.8 million should refer to the number of beneficiaries WFP is feeding in all of Somalia and UN ROME has asked WFP to send a corrected version of the situation report.

The wet feeding programme in Mogadishu is ongoing in all 16 sites with sufficient stocks until end of January. 130 mt of mixed food commodities are expected to be distributed next week through the nutrition programme in Mogadishu. WFP will continue with food distribution in Afgoye corridor from Mogadishu when stocks are available.

Whereas UNHAS in-bound flights to Merka, K50, Wajid, Buaale and Beletwein are suspended until further notice, WFP will continue operations in Galkayo, Bossasso and Hargeisa. Flights to Mogadishu will be approved on a case-by-case basis.

Communities in affected areas are now putting pressures on TFG and insurgents to allow for WFP to resume operations, which has prompted Al Shabaab (AS) to issue a press statement denying its responsibility for causing insecurity and demanding money from

UN ROME 00000003 004 OF 004

aid agencies, including WFP.

WFP Security Update

-WFP continues to monitor the security situation in Somalia and support missions to the North. In Mogadishu, the threat of suicide attacks remains high between the airport and KM 4.

-On January 7, four WFP staff (three national staff member and one casual daily worker employed as local security assistant) was relocated out of Wajid to Hargeisa.

-The same day, all movements for all UN staff members on missions using the Garowe - Bossasso road have been restricted with immediate effect. The decision is a precautionary measure after the government announcement of the killing of the Puntland MP on 5 January 2010. Security clearances for missions using the Bossasso - Garowe road have been revoked.

-In Hargeisa, Bossasso and Galkayo, international staff members are present and able to continue with programme activities.

COUSIN